

civora forficata). It was in rather worn plumage, with new feathers partly out, and was working southward, alone. Records of this bird for Florida are so few, that I am publishing this one, as I did a previous record, though both these records, as well as unpublished records of other species, will appear in my forthcoming book, the "Birds of Florida."—HAROLD H. BAILEY, *Miami Beach, Fla.*

BIRD BANDING NEWS

Conducted by Wm. I. Lyon

ADVENTURES IN BIRD BANDING

By Kathleen M. Hempel

Having been interested in birds since childhood, and having for a number of years kept migration schedules and other notes, I had come to the conclusion that I knew a great deal about the subject. Then I took up banding and it did not take me very long to discover just how little I did know. The subject is vast, has wonderful possibilities, and I feel we have just begun to scratch the surface. I think very few of us realize what a remarkable discovery this was, the placing of bands on living birds. In a few years all other methods of studying birds at close range will seem obsolete and out of date, and every ornithologist will be a bander. The best part of this study is that when one begins it, it is almost impossible for him to stop, for it is wonderfully fascinating. If one be forced to discontinue the work for a short time, he comes back to it with more enthusiasm than ever, firmly resolved to either exceed or break his previous records. I have found this true of myself, at least.

I have been banding birds since the winter of 1920. I shall never forget the first bird I caught. It was a chickadee, and I have never been able to discover which was the more frightened, the little gray bird or myself. But since that time I have banded 624 birds of thirty species, which does not include the times I have handled repeats. Most of these birds were adults, and the majority of the nestlings banded were House Wrens just about to leave the nesting box. Personally I do not care about banding nestlings; they are too dull and uninteresting. I much prefer to handle the adult birds, and last spring I do not think I banded any nestlings, except for the wrens already mentioned.

Following is the list of birds which I have banded with the returns for each: Catbird 38, returns 10; Robin 65, returns 3; Bronzed Grackle 76, returns 4; Blue Jay 125, returns 18; Black-capped Chickadee 55, returns 13; Tufted Titmouse 4; White-breasted Nuthatch 35, returns 19; Red-breasted Nuthatch 4; Downy Woodpecker 31, returns 19; Hairy Woodpecker 9, returns 3; Red-headed Woodpecker 15, returns 3; Red-bellied Woodpecker 6; Flicker 8; House Wren 38, return 1; Baltimore Oriole 11; Mourning Dove 4; Purple Martin 9, return 1; Brown Thrasher 15, return 1; Rose-breasted Grosbeak 8; Chipping Sparrow 8; Maryland Yellowthroat 3; White-throated Sparrow 1; Ovenbird 1; Gray-cheeked Thrush 1. All of these were captured in my yard with the exception of the Mourning Doves, three of which were nestlings and the other an adult captured by a friend. Other birds not trapped in the yard but banded afield were Field Sparrow 4; Nighthawk 4; Bank Swallow 3; and Red-winged Blackbird 1. The last-named was a female that had been wounded in the wing. She wintered on our sleeping-porch and in the spring we released her.

With the exception of those specified, all the above birds have entered my traps. It may be of interest to some to know the kinds of traps used. I have a government sparrow trap, two pull-string traps and just at present I am trying out an Everset. If I were asked which trap I prefer, I could not say. It was in the government trap that I caught the yellowthroats and the thrush. The birds are quite changeable, for sometimes weeks will pass and not a bird will enter the pull-string, and then they will flock to it, leaving the government trap entirely deserted. Or it may be just the other way around. One can never tell just what the birds will do. The strange part of it is, that the birds in the winter use the pull-strings most and in summer seem to prefer the government trap. I have caught a great many Blue Jays in the latter.

Many birds that I feed in the winter bring their young to the traps in the summer for food. Last summer I had the following old birds go into the traps and take the young in with them to feed them: Blue Jays, Brown Thrashers, Red-headed Woodpeckers. They all brought their babies to eat suet, and the very worst trick ever played by an unnatural mother was played on me by a Catbird. She brought three of her children which were just able to fly and whose little tails were just visible, then she deserted them. They fairly lived in the pull string traps and grew up strong and well, as I kept a variety of foods out for them—nuts, bread, seeds and suet. I banded them all. They became very fearless and I was proud of my foster children.

I have had many questions about how I catch Blue Jays. I seem to have more of this species than any other, yet some people cannot entice even *one* into their traps. I think the jays are more wary in the winter, and although they do come around and I catch them fairly often, they are not nearly so abundant as in the summer. This leads me to believe that jays do migrate a bit farther south in the winter, although some of them are permanent residents. In the summer they are quite bold, and are sometimes desperately in need of food for their young, so that is the time when I trap the most of them. The latter part of June and all of July is the best time for jays.

I have captured many kinds of woodpeckers. Not one of these was caught in a tree-trunk trap, but all were caught in traps that I have on the ground. The birds go to them no matter where they are moved, and it seems that I have no trouble in getting them at all. I cannot explain the reason why they go to the traps—they just go. They have not yet discovered the Everset trap, and I shall be interested in seeing how long it will be before they find it. The chickadees discovered it in a few hours and I caught two the first day.

I have learned a few things by trapping that I could not have learned in any other way. For instance, I did not know that the Hairy Woodpecker had a clear quavering whistle, shrill and loud like a child's toy whistle. But one day about two years ago I had one in my trap and he gave this strange call. On reporting it to the Biological Survey I found that it was a call known to very few ornithologists and very seldom heard. So I thought myself particularly fortunate.

So often people ask the question, "Which is the most interesting bird that comes to your traps?" It is a hard question to answer, but after watching some of the antics of the Blue Jays I came to the conclusion that they were interesting enough for special observation. It is a well known fact that jays rob the nests of other birds and devour the young. I once saw a jay kill and carry off a

young wren that was just learning to fly. But I made the strange discovery last summer, that Blue Jays do not disdain a dead bird either, rather regarding one as a tasty morsel. I chanced on the discovery in this manner. We have a martin house and try as we will we cannot eradicate the sparrows or keep them from it. I always trap and kill a great many and one day about ten or twelve sparrows were in the government trap at once. I drowned the lot and threw them in a pile in the garden, as I was then very busy, and in about half an hour I returned to bury them. To my astonishment they were gone. I accused a stray cat of making away with them, but was not sure. I thought I would experiment and so kept putting the dead sparrows in the same place each time I caught and killed one. They disappeared in such a short time that I could not account for it, for I never saw a cat about. But one day I chanced to see a jay in a plum tree, and he was tearing up something and devouring it with great relish. I went for my glasses and learned that it was a sparrow that he was eating with such satisfaction. In a short time I had caught another sparrow, which I placed in the same spot, concealed myself and watched. In a moment a Blue Jay swooped down, caught the sparrow's head in his beak and flew away with the bird. It was a most amazing sight, for although the sparrow was fully grown, the jay did not seem to find it a burden at all.

Permit me to add here an interesting observation regarding the English Sparrow. Recently I had one in my trap that flew against the wire with such force that it killed itself. I was about to remove it when I noticed another male that had entered the trap and was dragging the dead bird about. So I left it there just to see what the result would be. A short time later I went to the trap and found that the eyes of the dead bird had been pecked out, and further investigation showed that the head had been almost plucked bare of feathers and that the other bird had eaten the dead bird's brains. I have been having sparrows in my traps for years, but I never knew anything like this to happen before. I wonder if I had left the bird there if it would have been wholly devoured. The females did not take part in the cannibalistic feast and I wonder if the dead bird had been a female instead of a male, that it would have been eaten in the same manner. It came as a great surprise to me since the sparrows have always preferred the seeds in the trap to any other bait except nuts.

The most interesting returns that I have ever had, and some that prove that numbers of our summer-grackles winter in Arkansas was shown last spring when I received word that two grackles banded the preceding summer had been killed in that state. One was taken at Oil Trough and the other at Arkadelphia. In each case the man who took the bird had been attracted by the band on the bird's leg and had killed it to find out where the bird had come from. Two other banded grackles have been captured in Iowa; one at St. Olaf, about six miles from here, and the other at Logansport in Boone County. The bird captured at St. Olaf was sick when found, and the farmer who found it kept it until it had recovered, when he released it.

Some birds are so clever and amusing that one will get many a chuckle from banding. When first I began to trap chickadees, they used to frighten me to death by "playing dead". Other birds have done this also, the White-breasted Nuthatch, and the Slate-colored Junco. Even the Blue Jays will attempt it, but they cannot resist keeping one eye open just to see what one is about.

When the chickadees found that I had no intention of harming them, they became familiar and bit without the least hesitation, and if you think a chickadee cannot bite hard, just because of its small size, you have a very painful experience awaiting you. I will not soon forget one trick that one of these little rascals played on me. As I am very much handicapped by poor hearing, I cannot always tell if the bird in my hand is making an outcry or not. One day I caught a chickadee which looked as though he might be cheeping, so I put him close to my ear to find out, for generally the call is so shrill that I can hear it. He caught hold of my ear with his beak and would not let go and I had to have my mother rescue me.

Speaking of chickadees makes me think of one of my favorites. His number is 75647, and he is almost the first bird that I banded, lives here the year round, and is continually at one trap or the other. He is the bird who discovered the Everset trap and was the first to enter it. He must be over five years old, for he was an adult when first caught. May he live at least five years longer.

Birds resemble people in that they have many characteristics that distinguish the individuals. Bird friends are like our human friends, for while it is most interesting to make new acquaintances, how delightful it is to meet those old pals of long standing! I cannot describe the wonderful sensation it is to take a Bronzed Grackle, Catbird, Robin, or any other migratory bird from the trap, and to know that after making two long tiresome journeys he has come back safely to your yard, just because he knows that there is a feast spread there for him. You examine his band, you pat his head, and I for one cannot resist saying foolish little words of welcome. I do not know if he understands me or not, but he seems to realize that I will not harm him. I have a peculiar affection for the Catbirds: they are so shy and soft and confiding, and I have had more returns from this species than from any other migratory bird.

To those who feel more than a general interest, who feel a real and genuine affection for the birds, my advice is to start banding them. Maintain a trapping station, for there is nothing that gives me more pleasure than to hold a live bird in my hand, to feel it snuggle down confidingly, to study its plumage at close range, and then to see it fly away alive and happy. Although there is no library here for reference, I have a collection of bird books of my own, but I can truthfully say that I have learned more from my banding than I have ever learned from books.

ELKADER, IOWA.

NOTES FROM S. PRENTISS BALDWIN

There was no work done at the Baldwin trapping station at Thomasville, Georgia, this year, so no report can be made: the failure to carry on the work was due to illness, and it is hoped the station may be operated another year so there may be no serious break in the work there.

We are happy to say that Mr. T. Walter Weiseman, of Pittsburgh, is to assist Mr. Baldwin in the research during spring and summer at Hillcrest Farm near Cleveland, and will be watching those House Wrens every day. Mr. Weiseman has been in business in Pittsburgh, but found time to make some remarkable photographs and moving pictures of birds.